

**TESTIMONY OF MARY KIFFMEYER,  
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**COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,  
HEARING ON ELECTION DAY VOTER REGISTRATION AND  
STATEWIDE PROVISIONAL VOTING  
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on House Administration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the integrity of elections. I am here to testify in favor of integrity in the entire election system.

The question is asked, "Does same day registration increase turnout?" The record shows that Minnesota consistently had higher turnout rates before same day registration. In the 24 years prior to same day, the average turnout was 77 %. After same day, it is an average of 71%.

As Minnesota Secretary of State for 8 years, I worked very hard to return Minnesota's voter turnout to those higher numbers and in all years of my service, Minnesota did have the highest voter turnout in the country for 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006. But I believe that with added integrity to our same-day registration process, Minnesota's numbers will go higher.

My approach was to encourage everyone to participate and focus on a positive message of optimism for our country and a message of integrity. The principles of accuracy, access, integrity and privacy of the vote guided every action I took. I believe that my message of hope and focus on integrity contributed, as much as an election official's words can, to the upward trend in Minnesota election turnout."

Those principles resulted in taking positions as Secretary of State even when the tide was strong against it. I stood strong for paper ballots while protecting the access of voters with disabilities and testified to Congress to the importance of that level of integrity in the election system. Minnesota is recognized as a leading state on that subject having chosen Precinct Optical Scan equipment as our first choice and has used our HAVA money well to accomplish what Congress intended. In Minnesota, with this equipment, the methodical recounts of ballots, aggressive training of all levels of election workers, the auditing statewide of results and certification of the code has given my state great confidence in that part of the election system.

I have read and heard a great deal since the 2000 election about the need for counting the ballots accurately and to give voters confidence in the outcome. We have accomplished that in Minnesota.

But an election is a system from registration to final counts of the ballots. The whole election system is only as strong as the components and integrity and confidence can't just rest on the final stage of counting the ballots.

In this bill, focus is on the start of the election system in- voter registration. I believe that the same level of scrutiny as to the counting of the ballots needs to be present when deciding who gets a ballot. The right to vote is given to US Citizens by our constitution and the election system owes it to the American people to give assurance that the registration part of the process is accurate and completed with integrity. If it isn't, the rest of the process becomes suspect.

Anyone who thinks that there is no stealing of votes should go home and next time don't lock their doors or cars when leaving. The focus in the registration and election system overall should be one of prevention and gaining public confidence. After an election, it is very difficult to correct issues in registration. Prevention and assurance of integrity is a good, sound policy to use for elections as well as for your homes and cars. Don't we all check the door before walking away ... just to be sure?

In Minnesota, I have heard on election day, while visiting a university polling place, college students asked me, when visiting the polling places on Election Day, why we don't we have photo ID.? They mention how easy it would be to bust this system. Matter of fact, in this week's issue of the University of Minnesota Daily Newspaper, a commentary is written supporting Photo ID. These students are in sync with the minds of Jimmy Carter, James Baker and Andrew Young. These young folks state, "...a photo ID would not be a poll tax, but a voting enabler."

Photo ID also needs to be partnered with immediate verification as HAVA requires. In this day of illegals potentially gaining access to the driver license system, the verification of citizenship and accuracy of the connection of the ID card to the person voting is only common sense.

While some tout only the benefits and gloss over the challenges, I will convey some issues you have to deal with in same day registration. Unless you are a very small precinct, you are very likely to have long lines. Long lines with waits of 2-3 hours occur. Local jurisdictions find it hard to staff appropriately when they don't know how many are coming to vote. So they need to have extra staff. Confusion over ID requirements (which are very hard to sort out in the polling place with lines of voters) creates Election Day issues sometimes of major import when time is short and the urgency is great. Not knowing how many are coming results in needing to have extra ballots printed or sometimes running out of ballots (since you don't know for sure how many are coming.) I was called to a downtown Minneapolis precinct where they had run out of ballots and pens. I

gave my staff person money and instructed him to go find pens if he has to knock on the neighbor's doors one by one to get them. The ballots came, we had the pens, but it was not a pretty sight. Yes, many of those situations were rectified, but they just should not happen. However, with same-day, it is nearly impossible to prevent. And in this type of situation, cheating is easier to slip through. Once the election is over, the messiness of dealing with those issues is well recognized. That is why it is imperative to structure policy and methodology in the preventive mode.

Even with tremendous amounts of voter education in Minnesota, the urgency on Election Day about registration while in the polling place with lines of voters waiting has caused some to leave and not vote. Young parents with daycare cannot just wait this out. This is especially true on college and urban polling places.

In Minnesota, a case was successfully prosecuted for several students who double-voted and another case where someone triple voted. Same day registration can facilitate that happening. Remember that these are those who are caught and it is only after their votes have been counted. Verification is required for all other citizens who pre-register to vote and I believe it is unfair to allow those on Election Day to bypass those safeguards.

If provisional voting is implemented with verification of ID at time of registration, provisional voting can become the safeguard to making voting easy, but cheating hard.

We not only do not have Provisional voting in Minnesota, we have a policy of "vouching". This is where on Election Day, any person can come in without any form of ID, and on the written word of another person who is already registered but not vouched for, get a ballot that is immediately cast. This ballot once cast, even if later determined it is dishonest, cannot be removed.

There is no surer way to undermine the motivation of an honest voter than the fear that an honest ballot will be cancelled out by an illegal one.

"Does same day registration increase turnout?" Minnesota consistently had higher turnout rates before same day registration. The pattern of higher turnout in presidential years and lower in gubernatorial continues, but even though Minnesota leads the nation in turnout, the comparison of those years before and after Election Day registration still shows a decline in the ratio of turnout in Minnesota compared to that in the rest of the nation. Election Day registration has reduced, not increased Minnesota's advantage.

I believe our federal system of government, where states make their own decisions about how elections are run works better than having politicians in Washington impose their views. I oppose federal preemption of state election

procedures. Under our Constitution, we do not have federal elections, we have state-run elections for federal office. We do not have, and should not have “federal elections” run from Washington by the federal government in every local precinct in America.

But if you in Congress are going to go with imposing same-day registration on every state, whether they like it or not, take some steps to try to protect the integrity of the process as well. If you impose a rigorous let-everyone-vote measure, then at the very least you should couple it with rigorous make-sure-everyone-is-eligible measures like, prohibiting states from issuing drivers licenses to illegal aliens and requiring a state-issued photo ID like a drivers license and verification in the polling place before the ballot is cast, with provisional balloting as a safeguard.

Don't we owe the American people that kind of election?

I believe and functioned as Secretary of State that turnout in elections is tied to integrity in the election system and integrity in politicians. Where people see a lack, they don't vote. Cynicism is the greatest deterrent to voting. Please do not feed that cynicism by designing an election policy or implementation that is fatally flawed and will feed that cynicism and thereby reduce involvement and participation in the most basic function of citizenship, voting.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.